In 1891, the Women’s Missionary Association of the United Brethren in Christ sent Dr. Marietta Hatfield of Miami County, Ohio, to the Rotifunk Mission Station in Moyamba, Sierra Leone. There, Dr. Hatfield’s medical work eventually led to founding a hospital. Dr. Hatfield was joined by two other medical women sent by the Women’s Missionary Association, Dr. Mary C. Archer and Ella M. Schenck.

Tragically, all three women were killed in an uprising in 1898, when the British colonial government levied a tax on the indigenous people. Missionaries were targeted because they spoke English and were therefore associated with the British. Sierra Leonean church members also lost their lives. The hospital was ransacked and looted. Yet, the United Brethren in Christ were not discouraged: they sent more missionaries, rebuilt the damaged properties and advanced the mission to more places.

In 1932, Dr. Mabel Silver, from Baltimore, Maryland, was sent to Rotifunk by the Women’s Missionary Association. At that time, Dr. Silver described the hospital as one ward with three beds, with only herself and an interpreter as staff. They could handle 12–15 mothers and babies at a time.

In 1951, a small cement building was constructed to hold a laboratory, pharmacy, delivery room, maternity unit, wards for men and women, and a surgical room. In 1953, a nurse-midwife from England arrived, and she and Dr. Silver began a school to train local women from Sierra Leone to become midwives.

Dr. Silver dedicated her professional life to the people of Rotifunk. When she retired in 1962, the maternity ward and baby clinic cared for 500–700 babies a week. In addition, 66,000 additional patients were treated annually.

Source: Christie House, “House Notes: Caring for Mothers, Sierra Leone (Part 2: The Development of Rotifunk Hospital),” New World Outlook, July 2011.